

Adolf Hitler's Armed Forces: A Triumph for Diversity?

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Triumph of diversity: This is precisely what characterized the German Armed Forces of World War II by the year 1945. While this may be difficult for many historians to accept, it is nevertheless an accurate summation of what happened in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. Even though the Germans initiated their war with a racist doctrine in mind, one that sought to create a "New Order" for Europe, with Germany at the center and German elites at the top of the European political and racial hierarchy (a German version of the so-called "White man's burden," so to speak), the Germans nevertheless had to scrap this racial doctrine for one that promoted internationalism and tolerated multicultural and interethnic cooperation and intimate relations. Many Nazis were deeply affected by the non-Germans with whom they fought and worked. For example, Fritz Freitag ended up throwing Nazi doctrine to the wind, and instead focused on building a Ukrainian liberation army.

In a telephone interview with German World War II survivor "G" (his identity is being protected), I was informed for the first time that foreigners who were working under "forced labor" contracts in Germany were essentially as free as Germans themselves. The forced labor characterization, according to G, was misleading. Foreigners were paid for their work and allowed to bring their families to live in Germany with them. They enjoyed leisure activities while ethnic Germans were slaughtered by the tens-of-thousands on the Eastern Front. Theory and reality in the Third Reich differed in fundamental ways, and unless we speak directly with those who lived in Europe at the time, we will never come to know what really happened between Germans and non-Germans in their day-to-day lives. This study tries to answer this unknown as best as possible, because it has been ignored or overlooked for too long.



Sworn-in at Stahnsdorf in 1943 this man served as a volunteer under Franz Wimmer-Lamquet with Sonderstab F (Major Felmy's Freies Arabien Division). Photo is in the public domain.

Let me quickly begin with a few words about terminology. When I use the Nazi terms *Mischlinge*, *Volljude*, and *Halbjude*, my intent is not racist. I use these terms only because they were used by the Nazis, so please do not mistake the Nazi terminology for my own. Secondly, I use the term *mulatto* in the historical sense. This term is not intended to be racist in this context, but is merely more convenient and historically accurate to use given the subject matter. I have tried very hard to be completely objective toward the Third Reich and its leadership, and have also given much thought to context as I have proceeded in my analysis of the history and historiography. I ask that those historians who have a subjective approach to Hitler and the Third Reich please refrain from judging my intent or bias until they have read my entire book, *Black Nazis! A Study of Racial Ambivalence in Nazi Germany's Military Establishment* from which this article is excerpted. There is a reason why I have presented my case as such, so hopefully fellow historians will come away from this "war and society" study with a deeper understanding of:

- racial dynamics in all Western societies before and since World War II;
- Axis history in general;
- Allied war criminality;
- non-German *Wehrmacht* and *SS* service (especially volunteerism);
- Adolf Hitler's racial views.
- racial changes that occurred within the official Nazi ethos (*Weltanschauung*) as a result of the war;
- the unpredictable treatment of Jews, blacks, and mixed-race people in Nazi Germany.

When I use the term "racial ambivalence," I use it in the literal sense: that many Nazis were literally "of two minds" about race and ethnicity. History relating to the National Socialist era is generally rife with emotion and bias and this subjectivity prevents all historians from seeing what really happened in the Third Reich and why. Few historians have asked why so many ethnic minorities and foreigners supported the NS (National Socialist) military apparatus. Likewise, few have asked how so many mulattoes, Africans, and Jews survived the war in spite of the atrocities that were committed against these ethnic groups. This study focuses on those who survived the Nazi regime and why, not on those who died for any number of reasons.

The *Waffen SS* was largely composed of non-Germanic volunteers. Most historians continue to neglect the motivations of these men and women who fought for Hitler as opposed to the Allies. I felt that this was historically unacceptable given that every side feels that it alone is justified. Historians have generally described this interracial phenomenon as "inexplicable" when there is more than sufficient evidence to the contrary. Not only was Hitler ambivalent about his racial and ethnic views, but so too were many prominent Nazis, such as Franz Wimmer-Lamquet and Alfred Rosenberg. I have always maintained that unless the penchant for tolerance and acceptance of the "other" is present, no tolerance or acceptance of the "other" will occur in a genuine way. Many Nazis became great friends with non-Germans. Hitler and Himmler both went out of their way to accommodate their Arab-Semitic volunteers. Hitler met with the Grand Mufti, but failed to meet with the "Aryan" leader of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt. From this example, we may conclude that Hitler was willing to contradict his

own *Weltanschauung* in order to achieve what he needed to achieve politically and militarily. Interestingly, this general attitude of ambivalence was not limited to the military sphere. It extended into the realm of Third Reich society both before and during the war.

One excellent study on the SS, entitled *Hitler's Foreign Divisions* (edited by Chris Bishop), offered the following explanation for the international character of the SS. Few people realize just how international were the German forces of World War II. It is estimated that nearly two million foreign nationals served under the Swastika. Although towards the end of the war many were transferred to the SS, large numbers served with the Army, particularly on the Eastern Front. The most committed of the foreign volunteers found a home in the SS, until parts of it were more like a German equivalent of the French Foreign Legion than the elite of the German race.

Although the SS did not welcome non-German volunteers until midway through the conflict in Russia, the idea of recruiting such men *dated back to before the war*. In his quest for a pan-Germanic Europe, *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler had decreed in 1938 that non-Germans of suitable 'Nordic' origin could enlist in the *Allgemeine SS* [*emphasis added*].^[1]

One finds it nearly impossible to disagree with this general assessment of the character of the *Waffen SS*. One of the more striking features of Bishop's analysis is his conclusion as to the character of the future German elite as Himmler envisioned it. Bishop's conclusion is nearly identical to my own in that we both agree that the future German elite was not to be strictly race-based, but rather, based on a combination of "physiognomy, mental and physical tests, character, and spirit." Bishop rightly concluded that Himmler envisioned an "aristocratic" class that would combine "charismatic authority with bureaucratic discipline." This, then, would typify "a new human type— warrior, administrator, scholar and leader, all in one—whose messianic mission was to repopulate Europe."^[2] The absurd "Superman" notion was a result of Allied propaganda taking hold of and exploiting some of the more radical ideas put forth not by Hitler, but by Friedrich Nietzsche, of whom Hitler had expressed little admiration. In private, Hitler promoted a nearly identical vision to that of Himmler—with regard to a future German core leadership—to Otto Wagener, an early SA leader and one of Hitler's first economic advisors. However, in contrast to Himmler, Hitler tended to emphasize character, honor, and merit over biology, at that time and later on in 1944.

Hitler was consistently a merit man, and this tended to crop up in many racial conversations he had with his various subordinates and officials. Hitler displayed a marked ambivalence, in the literal sense of being 'of two minds,' when it came to race and ethnic heritage—he was always willing to make racial exceptions to his own ideology. He had told Wagener at one point that "retainers" (non-Germans) were as common as "heroes" (racial Germans) in early German society. The context and tone of this particular conversation and others, as far as can be deduced from the English translation, suggests that Hitler remained open to the idea of some degree of tolerance for foreign blood within the German folk-body (*Volkskörper*). Even when he seemed adamantly against Jewish blood infusion, he continued to make exceptions. The military and organizational performance and dedication of various ethnic minorities, such as Erhard Milch and Bernhard Rogge (both Jewish), and foreigners, such as the Grand Mufti (Arab) and Ante Pavelic (Croatian), certainly affected Hitler's thinking on the issue of race. He had even expressed admiration for many of his foreign allies, including the Grand Mufti and the Cossacks. By Lawrence Dennis' own account, Hitler sat down and spoke with him one-on-one. Dennis was half-

black.^[3] Hitler also spoke with African American Dr. S.J. Wright in 1932, which I discuss in more detail in my book.

As many of us know, Winifred Wagner and others, like Heinrich Hoffmann, convinced Hitler on more than one occasion to treat certain Jews with kindness. Thousands were granted his personal “German” clemency (*Deutschblütigkeitserklärung*). The fact that Jews could become “German blooded” was an unprecedented display of ethnic tolerance for the time period in question. The US did not even do this for blacks or Jews at that time. Blacks and Jews were not accepted as “WASPs” until the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and even then their position remained precarious.

No historian has done a more thorough job examining this Nazi-Jewish phenomenon than Bryan Mark Rigg. However, Rigg, like so many others, has failed to adequately answer why Hitler granted Jewish people clemency in the first place. While he affirms, and correctly so, that Hitler made exceptions to his own ideology for the sake of military expediency, he does not sufficiently explain why Hitler granted Milch or other Jews clemency before the war. Nor does he adequately explain why clemency was granted in 1944 and 1945—a time by which Hitler knew he was losing the war. Furthermore, his argument does not go far enough in explaining why Hitler exempted Jews and Gypsies (*Zigeuner*) from service in 1944 and 1945, by which time Germany needed every able-bodied man it could summon. Hitler did not allow Russian collaborator Andrei Vlasov independence until 1945. If he was so desperate for manpower, then why did he hold Vlasov’s Russian volunteers back until it was too late?

These are questions that Antonio J. Muñoz, Vladimir Baumgarten, and Peter Huxley-Blythe have answered more adequately and in more depth. However, not even these historians have questioned whether the Russians were reliable enough to use in a demanding way on the Eastern Front. They all seem to agree that had Hitler and the Nazis been more racially accepting earlier on, they would have won the war. But this is purely speculative. For all we know these foreigners could have caused the Germans to lose the war sooner than they did for any number of reasons—i.e., poor morale, indiscipline, etc. The *Dirlwanger* and *Kaminski* brigades were predominantly foreign, and included many Gypsies and Slavs, but their performance was so poor and their war crimes so atrocious that the Germans had to disband them. Many of the “Asiatic” men in the *Niedermayer* Division did not perform well under pressure. All of this was reported to Hitler, so more than likely the poor performance of most Russians factored into his decision to use the Russians under Vlasov politically as opposed to militarily. The fact that Hitler did not aim to liberate Russians also played a part in his decision not to use Vlasov’s men earlier, but his attitude changed rather markedly by the end of the war. The stenographic record portrays a Hitler who understood that the most he could hope for was to stall the Russian advance, and nothing more than that. He hoped that the Americans, French, and British would “come to their senses,” helping him and his men halt and repel the Bolsheviks, which is ultimately what happened during the subsequent Cold War.

The important thing to realize is that had the Nazis been as racist as most historians have argued, then they could not possibly have garnered the immeasurable level of support that they did. Even after Stalingrad; Spaniards, Slavs, Franks, and tens of thousands of other non-Germans continued to fight for the Nazis on a volunteer basis. Frenchmen and Arab volunteers gave their lives in the final fight for the capital of Berlin in 1945. Hitler continued to allow thousands of Jewish men to serve, and many did so with incredible tenacity and valor. One has to call into question whether all of these Jewish men and other non-Germans were really as opposed to the Nazi regime as they have claimed after the fact. Their

tenacity and determination suggests otherwise in many cases. The Jewish soldiers Bernhard Rogge, Helmuth Wilberg, Erhard Milch, and Ernst Prager come to mind. Hans Hauck, a half-black man, wanted to join the *Wehrmacht* in order to prove that he was as “German” as a white German. He elected to remain in Soviet captivity even though he was given a chance to leave with his comrades. He did so to prove that he was German. Such behavior seems unimaginable given what we have been told about Nazi treatment of blacks and mixed-race individuals in Third Reich society. The truth is that relations were far more fluid, dynamic, and complicated than many historians have led us to believe. Hauck had even been promoted to private first class.

This was the main reason I wrote my master’s thesis on this particular subject. When I first saw the books about all of these foreigners and ethnic minorities in Nazi service I was dumbstruck. Historians should not be comfortable with the fact that even many formally educated people (I was an undergraduate at the time) had or have no idea that some two million foreigners and ethnic minorities fought for the Axis. I examined their motives and thoughts as well as the thoughts and motives of Hitler and other Nazis in order to explain this phenomenon. This was why I examined POWs, forced laborers, conscripts, and volunteers: in order to get a clearer picture as to what these men and women went through and what they thought about all of it. This is a largely ignored aspect of the Axis and World War II in general. I figured it was time to break new ground.

Upon seeing part of Hitler’s Platterhof speech of May 26, 1944 in John Lukacs’ excellent biography *The Hitler of History*, I decided to purchase the speech from the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* and translate it into English myself (with assistance). Up to this point, no historian has translated this entire speech, which is rather remarkable in and of itself. It is a revealing speech, included in full in this second edition of *Racial Ambivalence*, and one in which Hitler admits rather openly as to having been wrong about race and *Volk*. While Hitler’s outlook remained “*Völkisch*-Nationalist,” he patently admitted that the strength of the German people as a whole was the result of its many different racial nuclei. He accepted that the German *Volk* was a “mixed-race” *Volk*, but resolved to nurture the Nordic race nucleus more than the others, since he believed this particular nucleus was the most qualified when it came to leadership and organizational capability. Thus, while Hitler’s thinking was still quite racially inclined, he seemed to have understood that individual Germans were more important in certain respects, due to their Nordic proclivities, than the German *Volk* as a whole (which he felt had to be led by the more capable Nordic types). In this speech Hitler emphasized merit and achievement above all else. This leads me to conclude that he associated Nordic race attributes with merit and achievement, and we can see here that this belief was a partial retraction from the official racial line of NS itself; because any individual with a Nordic bloodline could harbor the biological proclivity for leadership and organizational talent, regardless of whether he was “pure German.”

In this respect, Hitler was more accepting of non-German people than was, say, General Heinz Guderian. (On at least one occasion, Guderian requested “racially pure” divisions as per the stenographic record of Hitler’s military conferences). If a half-Jewish soldier exhibited leadership and organizational talent, then that Jewish individual received Hitler’s personal clemency. If we wished to speculate, as too many historians do, then we could say that, given this speech and Hitler’s change in outlook, had Hitler won the war he would have been more racially accepting, since some of his best leaders and most resolved soldiers were mixed-race or foreign-blooded (i.e., Admiral Bernhard Rogge, Field Marshal Erhard Milch, and Léon Degrelle of the SS *Wallonie* Division). The two Sabac el Cher sons, Herbert and Horst, both

mulattoes, were also presumably exempted by Hitler and allowed to serve in the *Wehrmacht* (one even served in the *Stahlhelm* in 1935).

Hitler ridiculed Himmler's and others' "primitive biologism" rather early on. This indicates, as I have argued, that Hitler was more racially open-minded, and earlier on, than previously thought. The Otto Wagener memoirs are filled with Hitler's ambivalent statements on race and ethnicity. Likewise, Hitler's "table talks" are contradictory in many ways. Since Hitler seemed to have consistently said contradictory things, we may conclude that he was consistently 'of two minds' about certain touchy issues, including race. In my view, this is a more cogent explanation of his personal acceptance of so many Jewish and foreign soldiers within German ranks.

I might add at this juncture that Rigg also provided an irrational explanation as to Hitler's "Aryanization" of Christ. If one examines what Hitler actually said about Christ early on, one sees that he really did believe that Christ was non-Jewish. This is obvious in the Wagener memoirs and Bormann records (*Hitler's Table-Talk, 1941-1944*). Hitler was not alone in this belief either. Many German theologians who were not Nazis or Hitler supporters also believed that Jesus Christ was non-Jewish. No historian to my knowledge has done a better job of exploring and analyzing this German phenomenon than Richard Steigmann-Gall. His study has offered a rational explanation for the "Aryanization" of Christ by so many Germans and Nazis, and one would do well to read what he has written. Unfortunately, Rigg fell short in this respect, though his research on Jewish soldier motivations and thoughts remains unparalleled.

Getting back to the main point here, I offer the following assessment. While there was certainly racial discrimination in Nazi Germany, there was also racial discrimination in America, Britain, France, Poland, Russia, Japan, China, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and Italy. In fact, Gerald Horne (author of *Race War!*) said that the British, in spite of their propaganda to the contrary, regularly and secretly discriminated against black soldiers. Blacks were not promoted simply because they were black. According to Horne, the British literally used conscripted Indian soldiers as cannon fodder on numerous occasions during the fighting in China. White British blood was apparently too precious to be spilled fighting against Chinese, who the British despised, abused, wantonly murdered, and degraded regularly. As I already mentioned, Sabac el Cher's two sons, both of whom were 'mulatto', served in Hitler's *Wehrmacht*, as did Mandenga Ngando (in 1940),^[4] a Cameroonian-German. Article VII of the First Supplementary Decree made this possible. Numerous blacks served during the Battle for Moscow, and at least one fell there. According to Rigg's latest book (2009), *Lives of Hitler's Jewish Soldiers*, some 2,000 full Jews, 60,000 half-Jews and 90,000 quarter-Jews served in Hitler's *Wehrmacht* and SS. This may even be an underestimate of the true figures. We just do not know.

At least two million non-German foreigners and ethnic minorities served in Hitler's armed forces at one point or another. Without foreign and non-German help, the Germans never would have had their Western defenses prepared in time for the Allied invasion. Let us think about two things here. Hitler's *Wehrmacht-Waffen SS* combination was the most culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse military force in Western history. In spite of this fact, we are all supposed to believe he was a *hyper-racist* (my own term) like some other Nazis.

What do I mean by hyper-racist? Well, just as some individuals in capitalist societies gravitate to the top and become hyper-capitalists (i.e., billionaire CEOs), even though they may not believe in the capitalist system of government per se, the same may be said of many powerful and prosperous individuals in ethnostates and their societies. Numerous Nazis were not adamant "racists," and those particular Nazis

(including Hitler) tended to fall by the wayside as far as political power was concerned. The hyper-racists, like hyper-capitalists, tended to be extremely ambitious and power-hungry individuals. Some may not have even been all that racist, but played the role in order to advance politically and personally. Himmler may well have been one of these hyper-racists, since he was so excited about (and accommodating of) Arab-Semites, Slavic Eastern volunteers, and Gypsies so early on. His demonstrated racial tolerance causes one to ask whether he was really as racist as he made himself out to be. Antonio Muñoz' findings as well as photographic evidence featured in Borsarello and Palinckx's *Wehrmacht and SS* indicate that he was open to recruiting Senegalese and Afro-British POWs to serve Germany in some capacity as well (not necessarily in combat). Thus, just as Richard Steigmann-Gall exposed Bormann's hyper-anti-Christianity in his book *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945*, many historians have similarly exposed Himmler's hyper-racism—perhaps inadvertently.

Hitler himself seems to have faded as far as power politics was concerned. Bormann and Himmler, along with the *Gestapo* and *Sicherheitsdienst*, usurped most of his actual power and he served as an ideological and moral inspiration for the German people and SS officers more than an actual power player within the Party or SS in those final two years of the war—though he maintained the final say in most military and political justice matters. Hitler retained the loyalty of the lower echelons of the *Wehrmacht*, SS, SA, and officer corps until the very end of his life, but he had lost a great deal of influence when it came to the higher ranks of the *Wehrmacht* and other elite cliques. As many already know, Himmler and Göring both betrayed Hitler in the end.

I ask those historians who still believe that Hitler and the Nazis were “white supremacists”: how do you account for the incredible degree of non-German and ethnic minority (i.e., 150,000 Jews and Jewish *Mischlinge*) collaboration during World War II? Again, some two million non-Germans helped the Nazis. If Muñoz' figures are to be believed, then nearly 1.5 million of these volunteers and conscripts were Russians. Let me compare this to a similar modern example by asking whether Zionist Jews, as members of a present-day ethnostate, can honestly boast of such high levels of foreign and ethnic minority collaboration and volunteerism? How about the less recent white South Africans of former Rhodesia? Hundreds-of-thousands of Nazi collaborators were volunteers. How many Palestinians, Persians, Jordanians, or Syrians have volunteered to fight for the IDF and the modern Israeli ethnostate? Some have, of course, but not nearly two million. Foreigners and non-Germans even volunteered for *Schuma* (security police), SS, and *Gestapo* service during the Third Reich. Can Israel's Mossad boast the same? These are comparative questions we must ask ourselves and analyze, without emotion, in order to understand what really happened in Nazi Germany and why. We also have to admit that the Nazis were not nearly as racist as historians have claimed. This is an especially important admission when we consider the historical context.

Roosevelt *opposed* anti-lynching laws against African Americans for the sake of political expediency. In an incredible admission to Walter White, head of the NAACP, he said, “If I come out for the anti-lynching bill now, they will block every bill I ask Congress to pass to keep America from collapsing. I just can't take that risk.” Furthermore, according to the *New World Encyclopedia*, “After 1942, when Roosevelt was made aware of the Nazi extermination of the Jews by Rabbi Stephen Wise, the Polish envoy Jan Karski and others, he refused to allow any systematic attempt to rescue European Jewish refugees and bring them to the US.”^[5] To this day the US public is mostly unaware of these incredible examples of Roosevelt's racism and arrogance.

Some blacks were literally incinerated to death by hostile white mobs eager to unleash their aggression against an easy target.^[6] While many Africans and Afro-Germans were discriminated against in Nazi Germany, the Nazi government never advocated or endorsed lynching of blacks in the Nazi state, nor was racism against Africans institutionalized. In fact, World War II survivor Friedrich Berg unequivocally stated that German children greatly admired Jesse Owens and looked up to him in spite of his race.^[7] This was relayed to Mr. Berg by a man who lived in Nazi Germany at the time. Indeed, there is no reason to doubt the veracity of this man's claim; Germans cheered Owens and repeatedly chanted his name – "Jess-ah O-vens, Jess-ah O-vens" – at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Owens himself told the press that he was not forced to sit at the back of German buses, nor was he disallowed to stay at the nicest hotels. Mr. Berg's acquaintance also mentioned that Owens could have walked into any bar in Germany and been treated as well as a German patron. Contrast this with the fact that in Britain and the US, even prominent blacks were often forced to stand in buses and were *never* allowed to stay in classy areas designated for "whites only". African American journalist and author Roi Ottley recounted many of the everyday horrors of British and US treatment of blacks in his book *No Green Pastures*. It should come as little surprise that Ottley reported that British boys lit Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's "frizzly hair" on fire "to see if it would burn."^[8] Such crass racism amongst the youth of Britain at the time is largely neglected by today's historians, mainly because it does not fit today's whitewashed image of the Allies. Perhaps this is one reason why few historians have mentioned that Cameroonian Louis Brody wrestled for the German Circus Crown throughout the Nazi years, and was the most famous Afro-German actor from the 1920s through 1940s.^[9]

Even fewer historians realize that Martin Bormann issued a circular to all *Gauleiters* (regional leaders) in March 1936 calling for employment protection of Africans and Afro-Germans living and working in Germany. This order flew in the face of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws.^[10] We may presume that Hitler had something to do with this protective measure, as it remains doubtful that Bormann himself was that concerned with the welfare of blacks. Joachim von Lang has argued that Bormann did everything in his personal power to keep Jewish letters of appeal and clemency applications as well as disturbing war information from Hitler. One need not guess how this man's actions may have adversely affected Afro-Germans and other blacks living and working in Germany, especially in light of Hitler's severely declining health and political activeness in the latter half of the war.

To conclude, true racists do not suddenly discard their "master race" doctrine simply because of military setbacks. White South Africans and Israelis refused to discard their racial supremacist doctrines in spite of antagonistic world opinion and military setbacks. Israel has yet to allow Palestinians into its highest levels of government. Likewise, the US has yet to allocate top-level military and governmental command to non-whites. Whether or not any of these modern states qualify as truly racist is up to historians and politicians to decide. But they must do it without the hysteria normally associated with such controversial historical and comparative inquiries. If historians cannot get past the hysteria so typical of Third Reich historiography, then how are they going to explain phenomena like the *Jüdische Ordnungsdienst* (Jewish Order Police), which assisted the Germans with policing the main ghettos of Poland? An estimated 2,500 Jewish men served in Warsaw and half that number in the Lodz ghetto during the Nazi occupation.^[11]

Having said all this, one fact remains: the Nazis were not true racists unless all other ethnostates at that time (and since) were also truly racist. Harry Truman, not Adolf Hitler, said the following: "I think one man is as good as another so long as he's honest and decent and not a nigger or a Chinaman. Uncle

Will...says that the Lord made a white man out of dust, a nigger from mud, then threw up what was left and it came down a Chinaman.” Had Hitler said this, historians certainly would have used it as evidence of his uncompromising racism. And yet, even though no such statements ever came out of Hitler’s mouth, not even with regard to Jews in private, historians have still consistently argued that he was an uncompromising racist, while conveniently ignoring the blatant and sometimes grossly inhuman racism of both Allied and non-German Axis leaders. The British conducted “bizarre tests of racial purity,” but only Berlin’s ‘racial purity’ tests were subjected to international scrutiny and attack. [12] Gerald Horne relayed that “[e]ven as the Empire seemed on the verge of being overrun by predatory Japanese troops, London was unwilling to accept offers of aid by people not of ‘pure European descent’ — particularly for posts beyond simple soldiering. He went on to say, “This applied to ‘Dartmouth Cadetships and direct entry cadetships’ where the ‘practice of the interview committee’ was to ‘reject boys who evidently have a colour stain’.” [13] The British deliberately left racial references like this out of official memoranda just in case these memoranda ended up in anti-British hands. To cite another example: Croats were hardly tolerant of Serbs during World War II, and yet we never read about this in most history books. Is it because Croats and Serbs do not deserve our historical inquiry? Are they somehow ‘less human’ or ‘less important’ than other ethnic groups of the era?

Hitler’s *true racism*, as I prefer to say, is an ahistorical construct. Historians decided who was racist and who was not on the basis of who won World War II. However, historians cannot have it both ways: Either all Western leaders are portrayed for the racists they were or none of them are portrayed as such—that is, in the historical sense. We do not get to pick and choose our racists. If we do so, then we need to research ever further back in history and condemn Emperor Hadrian as a genocidal anti-Semite, Napoleon as an anti-black racist and genocidal maniac (in light of his actions against Roma and blacks), and the Romans as racist against Greeks.

I will add at this point that the Germans never had a “master race” doctrine to begin with. *Herrenvolk* does not mean “master race.” That definition was the result of a combination of Allied misunderstanding of the German *Führerprinzip* and anti-German war propaganda. It meant ‘elite leadership corps’, and that was strictly in reference to continental Europe, not the world. Hitler did not have world aims, but European ones. Further, the German terms folk (*Volk*) and race (*Rasse*) were not synonymous. *Herrenvolk* (“Volk of leaders”) was not akin to *Herrenrasse*, and as a matter of fact, the Nazis never used the term *Herrenrasse* (“race of leaders”). Indeed, Hitler himself differentiated the two German terms at Platterhof. He said, “*Volk und Rasse ist nicht dasselbe.*” (“Folk and race are not the same.”) It appears that historians influenced by wartime Allied propaganda, and not the Nazis themselves, invented this term and its subsequent racist connotation. This explains why so many Western Allied leaders were shocked to see Russians fighting for Nazis on the Western Front, Indo-Chinese in the *Ostlegionen* (Eastern legions), and why historians have been loath to describe such Nazi racial dynamics even unto the present day.

Gerald Horne described Japanese racial ideology as “sufficiently flexible to allow for...special appeal [...]” [14] This description applies to Nazi racial ideology as well. Antonio J. Muñoz went so far as to call into question the rationality of the Spanish volunteers after Franco’s official withdrawal. In so doing, he has failed to explain that the Axis did not see itself as particularly racist, nor did it see itself as unjustified in its war, aims, or conduct. Countless Spaniards loathed Communism and proved quite willing to help Germany in her fight against that political philosophy. As such, they were “true believers” in continued European independence from Russia. The majority of Axis soldiers, including those who were

conscripted by the Nazis, were anti-Communist or anti-Bolshevik. Still others, like the French, were anti-British. They were “racists” in their own right, many of them. The Croats were exterminating ethnic minorities long before the Germans occupied Croatia helping it to achieve independence. Vichy French loyalists continued to defy British and American efforts to “liberate” France into 1943:

The final phase of this war within a war was the invasion of North Africa, where Vichy forces numbered 100,000. Despite a twin assault by US, British and Free French forces on Morocco and Algeria, Vichy garrisons, but especially ships and submarines, proved more determined in their resistance than expected. A French squadron was sunk by the US off the coast of Morocco, with 500 French sailors killed and 1,000 wounded. [\[15\]](#)

Numerous Frenchmen resisted the Allies until the very end of the war, whereupon they fought and died in the streets of the German capital.

The point of addressing these little known facts is to encourage historians to stop looking at the Third Reich and Axis in such rigid formulae, and instead, to examine it with dynamism and transformation in mind. The war affected Nazis deeply. Many of them had cast off their racism as a result of the camaraderie they developed with their fellow non-German equals and subordinates. As White Russian exile Grigori von Lambsdorff confirmed, most non-Germans saw themselves as equals, not as racial inferiors. This calls into question just how the Nazis treated their non-German comrades in- arms in spite of official propaganda. If Lambsdorff and others saw themselves as equals, then Nazi racial degradation was either non-existent or far less pervasive than historians have claimed it was.

I will end by referencing a news article that examined the increasing number of neo-Nazis and white supremacists in the US Armed Forces (to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan). [\[16\]](#) In spite of America’s official commitment to non-racism and ethnic and social equality, it is knowingly and willingly recruiting racists, and thus tolerating racism, within the military sphere. The exigencies of war have caused this US phenomenon just as exigencies of war caused the Nazis to renege on their official racial doctrine. What tends to happen as a result of developments like these is general and growing acceptance of those who are the newly tolerated (those who used to be shunned), and not vice versa. The normally shunned individuals who are newly tolerated tend to swing the balance of power into their favor, because the exigencies of war naturally favor those who are now “needed” in light of the declining general situation. In light of this assessment, we can honestly argue that the Nazis became less racist at a faster rate than did the Allies, because they were forced to speed up the process of interracial integration and cooperation due to the exigencies of war. War became, to use Tina Campt’s phrase, a positive “vehicle of change” in the Third Reich. The Nazis never racially segregated their troops. Blacks, Slavs, Asians, and Arabs fought shoulder-to-shoulder with Germans.

Now, if we examine the US today, we see that the racists in the armed forces will be the ones to gain the upper hand, since they are needed. The balance of power has swung in their favor due to the exigencies of war. This may well result in the racialization of the US Armed Forces, which remains under supreme white command in spite of America’s official doctrine of non-racism and equality for all, and we may well see that America becomes more racist and doctrinally supremacist than was Nazi Germany. America’s war is proving to be a negative “vehicle of change” in this respect. My point with this comparison is to demonstrate that we must not examine history or modern developments in a static way any longer, because just as the Nazis changed, so too shall we.

Notes:

- [1] *Hitler's Foreign Divisions: Foreign Volunteers in the Waffen-SS 1940-1945*, ed. Chris Bishop (London, UK: Amber Books, 2005), 8-9.
- [2] *Ibid.*, 10.
- [3] Gerald Horne, *The Color of Fascism: Lawrence Dennis, Racial Passing, and the Rise of Right-Wing Extremism in the United States* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), xv.
- [4] Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, *Treu bis in den Tod: Von Deutsch-Afrika nach Sachsenhausen—Ein Lebensgeschichte* (Berlin, DE: Ch. Links Verlag, 2007), 154.
- [5] New World Encyclopedia, "Roosevelt, Franklin Delano," http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Franklin_Delano_Roosevelt (accessed August 29, 2009).
- [6] Friedrich Berg, interview by author, August 27, 2009.
- [7] *Ibid.*
- [8] Roi Ottley, 27.
- [9] Bechhaus-Gerst, 76.
- [10] *Ibid.*
- [11] David Littlejohn, *Foreign Legions of the Third Reich Vol. 4: Poland, the Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Free India, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Russia* (San Jose, CA: R. James Bender Publishing, 1987), 27.
- [12] Gerald Horne, *Race War! White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2004), 237.
- [13] *Ibid.*, 236.
- [14] *Ibid.*, 147.
- [15] Christopher Silvester, "England's Last War Against France: Fighting Vichy, 1940-1942," *The Telegraph on the Web*, September 1, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/6121052/Englands-Last-War-Against-France-Fighting-Vichy-1940-1942.html> (accessed September 3, 2009).
- [16] Matt Kennard, "Neo-Nazis are in the Army Now," *Salon on the Web*, June 15, 2009, http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2009/06/15/neo_nazis_army/index.html (accessed July 1, 2009).

The above article in slightly different form is the preface to Veronica Clark's book, *Black Nazis! A Study of Racial Ambivalence in Nazi Germany's Military Establishment*

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